

**James Madison to Robert Livingston, July 29, 1803.
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ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,
1900-1910.**

TO ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON AND JAMES MONROE.¹ D. OF S. MSS. INSTR.

1 To James Monroe.

Washington, July 30, 1803.

Dear Sir I received your favor of by Mr. Hughes, the bearer of the public despatches from you & Mr. L. The purchase of Louisiana in its full extent, tho' not contemplated is received with warm, & in a manner universal approbation. The uses to which it may be turned, render it a truly noble acquisition. Under prudent management it may be made to do much good as well as to prevent much evil. By lessening the military establishment otherwise requisite or countenanced, it will answer the double purpose of saving expence & favoring liberty. This is a point of view in which the Treaty will be particularly grateful to a most respectable description of our Citizens. It will be of great importance also to take the regulation & settlement of that Territory out of other hands, into those of the U. S. who will be able to manage both for the general interest & conveniency. By securing also the exclusive jurisdiction of the Mississippi to the mouth, a source of much perplexity & collision is effectually cut off.

The communications of *your* *

* Italics for cypher.

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colleague hither, have fully betrayed the feelings excited by your messa., and that he was precipitating the business soon after yr. arrival without respect to the measure of the govt , to yr. self, or to the advantage to be expected from the presence & co-operation of the more immediate depository of the objects and sensibilities of his country It is highly probable that if the appeal to the French Govt. had been less hackneyed by the ordinary minister and been made under the solemnity of a joint and extraordinary embassy the impression would have been greater & the gain better.

What course will be taken by *his friends here remains to be seen.* You will find in the *gazettes a letter from Paris* understood to be from Swan inclosing a copy of his memorial representing it as *the primary cause of the cession, praising the patriotism which undertook so great a service without authority, and throwing your agency out of any real merit while by good fortune it snatched the ostensible merit.* This letter with the *memor?.* *has been published in all our papers* some of them making *comments favorable to Mr. Livingston,* others doing *justice to you, others ascribing the result wholly to the impending rupture.* Another *letter from Paris* has been published *wh. makes him Magnus Apollo.* The *publication of the memorial is so improper* and in reference to the *writer invites such strictures that [an answer?] from him is not to be presumed.* The *passages against Engld.* have not escaped the lash. It would not be very *wonderful if they were to be noticed formally or informally by the British Legation here.*

My public letter will shew the light in which the purchase of all Louisiana is viewed, and the manner in which it was thought proper to touch *Mr. L., in complaining that the commn. did not authorize the measure, notwithstanding the information given that he was negotg. for more than the East side of the Missi.* The pecuniary arrangements are much *disrelished,* particularly by *Mr. Gallatin.* The irredeemability of the stock which *gives it a value above par,* the preference of the *creditors to the true object in the cash payment* and the barring of a *priority among them, are errors most regarded.* The origin of the two last is *easily*

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understood. The claims of the different creditors rest on principles as different. . . . — Monroe MSS.

Department of State July 29th—1803.

Gentlemen,

Your dispatches, including the Treaty and two conventions signed with a French Plenipotentiary on the 30th of April, were safely delivered on the 14th by Mr. Hughes, to whose care you had committed them.

In concurring with the disposition of the French Government to treat for the whole of Louisiana, altho' the western part of it was not embraced by your powers, you were justified by the solid reasons which you give for it, and I am charged by the President to express to you his entire approbation of your so doing.

This approbation is in no respect precluded by the silence of your Commission and instructions. When these were made out, the object of the most sanguine was limited to the establishment of the Mississippi as our boundary. It was not presumed that more could be sought by the United States either with a chance of success, or perhaps without being suspected of a greedy ambition, than the Island of New Orleans and the two Floridas, it being little doubted that the latter was or would be comprehended in the Cession from Spain to France. To the acquisition of New Orleans and the Floridas, the provision was therefore accommodated. Nor was it to be supposed that in case the French Government should be willing to part with more than the Territory on our side of the Mississippi, an arrangement with Spain for restoring to her the territory on the other side would not be preferred to a sale of it to the United States. It might be added, that the ample views of the subject carried with him by Mr. Monroe and the confidence felt that your judicious management would make the most of favorable occurrences, lessened the necessity of multiplying provisions

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for every turn which your negotiations might possibly take.

The effect of such considerations was diminished by no information or just presumptions whatever. The note of Mr. Livingston in particular stating to the French Government the idea of ceding the Western Country above the Arkansa and communicated to this Department in his letter of the 29th January, was not received here till April 5 more than a month after the Commission and instructions had been forwarded. And besides that this project not only left with France the possession and jurisdiction of one bank of the Mississippi from its mouth to the Arkansa, but a part of West Florida, the whole of East Florida, and the harbours for ships of war in the Gulph of Mexico, the letter inclosing the note intimated that it had been treated by the French Government with a decided neglect. In truth the communications in general between Mr. Livingston and the French Government, both of prior and subsequent date, manifested a repugnance to our views of purchase which left no expectation of any arrangement with France by which an extensive acquisition was to be made, unless in a favorable crisis of which advantage should be taken. Such was thought to be the crisis which gave birth to the extraordinary commission in which you are joined. It consisted of the state of things produced by the breach of our deposit at New Orleans, the situation of the French Islands, particularly the important Island of St. Domingo; the distress of the French finances, the unsettled posture of Europe, the increasing jealousy between G Britain and France, and the known aversion of the former to see the mouth of the Mississippi in the hands of the latter. These considerations it was hoped, might so far open the eyes of France to her real interest and her ears to the monitory truths which were conveyed to her thro' different channels, as to reconcile her to the establishment of the Mississippi as a natural boundary to the United States; or at least to some concessions which would justify our patiently waiting for a fuller accomplishment of our wishes under auspicious events. The crisis relied on has derived peculiar force from the rapidity with which the complaints and questions between France and Great Britain ripened towards a rupture, and it is just ground for mutual and

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general felicitation, that it has issued under your zealous exertions, in the extensive acquisition beyond the Mississippi.

With respect to the terms on which the acquisition is made, there can be no doubt that the bargain will be regarded as on the whole highly advantageous. The pecuniary stipulations would have been more satisfactory, if they had departed less from the plan prescribed; and particularly if the two millions of dollars in cash, intended to reduce the price or hasten the delivery of possession had been so applied, and the assumed payments to American claimants on the footing specified in the instructions. The unexpected weight of the draught now to be made on the Treasury will be sensibly felt by it, and may possibly be inconvenient in relation to other important objects.

The President has issued his proclamation convening Congress on the 17th of October, in order that the exchange of the ratifications may be made within the time limited. It is obvious that the exchange, to be within the time, must be made here and not at Paris; and we infer from your letter of that the ratifications of the Chief Consul are to be transmitted hither with that view.

I only add the wish of the President to know from you the understanding which prevailed in the negotiation with respect to the Boundaries of Louisiana, and particularly the pretensions and proofs for carrying it to the River Perdigo, or for including any lesser portion of West Florida.

With high respect, &c.